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God has given to us, I know well, the liberty of use, but only so far as necessity leads. He has no more than that use should be common. And it is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more monstrous is it to do good to many, than to live sumptuously. How much wiser to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful to acquire decorous friends, than lifeless ornaments, which have and lose their value so much as conferring favours has. I remain for us, therefore, to do away with this allegation: Who, then, will have the more sumptuous things, if all select the simpler? I would say, if it be **Luis Ns Rivera-Pagán** exercise self-restraint, yet, with a view to the use of what is necessary, we must seek after what can be most readily procured, bidding a long farewell to these superfluous things.

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Luke 1:39-56: Mary's Visit to Elizabeth as a Biblical Instance of Mentoring

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A Hispanic/Latino Scholar in a North American Seminary

Carlos F. Cardoza Orlandi

In fine, they must be adorned with ornaments as girls' gewgaws, reflecting adornment, self-control, and they ought to be adorned within and show the inner woman beautiful. For in the soul alone are beauty and deformity shown. Wherefore also only the virtuous man is really beautiful and good. And it is laid down as a maxim, that only the beautiful is good. And excellence come through the beautiful body, and blossoms out in the face, exhibiting the amiable comeliness of self-control, whenever the character like a beam of light gleams in the form. For the beauty of each plant and animal consists in its natural excellence. The excellence of man is righteousness, temperance, and manliness, and godliness. The beautiful man is just, temperate, and in a word, good, not he who is rich. But now even the soldiers wish to be decked with gold, not having read that poetical saying:

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"With childish folly to the war he came,
Laden with store of gold."

But the love of ornament, which is far from being the virtue, mangles the body for itself, when the love of the beautiful has changed to empty show, as to be utterly emptied.

hispano

¹ Iliad, II, 572.

147-10

This issue of *Apuntes* focuses on the theme of mentoring. It is the result of a meeting of scholars who as part of the Hispanic Theological Initiative will be mentoring younger scholars as they pursue their doctorates in various fields of theology. At a mentor's training event in Santa Fe in June, each of the mentors presented reflections on the task of mentoring. Four of the articles that follow were written by prospective mentors for this event. **Dr. Herold Weiss** is Professor of Religious Studies at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. **Dr. Jean-Pierre Ruiz** is Associate Professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at St. John's University in Jamaica, New York. **Dr. Francisco O. García-Treto** is Professor of Old Testament Studies, Judaism, and Islam at Trinity University, San Antonio, TX. And **Dr. Luis N. Rivera-Pagán** is Professor of Humanities in the University of Puerto Rico, in Río Piedras, P.R.

The fifth article is by the **Rev. Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi**, Instructor in World Christianity, Missions, and Ecumenics at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA. It was presented at a later event in which all HTI awardees, as well as their mentors, were present.

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Baruch, the Courtier

Herold Weiss

It may be rather disingenuous to suggest that a man of the stature of the prophet Jeremiah had a mentor. What can a mentor do for one already blessed with the gift of prophecy? Besides, prophets are supposed to be rather independent fellows who are not influenced by others. As a prophet, Jeremiah stands out precisely because his book is not just a collection of oracles and sermons but also includes both what have come to be known as the "confessions" and the biographical narratives, where the human person is more in evidence. In spite of this, it is not quite the case that modern readers get a good look at Jeremiah's personality. Still, we have a sense that we know Jeremiah better than any other prophet. Since we feel we know him and understand him as a person we tend to idolize him, or we tend to romantically imagine him as the discoverer of "personal" religion.¹

Jeremiah's father, Hilkiyah, was a priest in Anathoth, four km. north of Jerusalem in the land of Benjamin. The reforms of King Josiah, described in Deuteronomy, prescribed that all local priests were out of commission in their local villages. Thus the family may have moved to Jerusalem for Hilkiyah to function at the only altar in the whole kingdom. On the other hand, Hilkiyah may have stayed in Anathoth and gone to Jerusalem just at the times when he was to serve at the temple. As a member of the family of a village priest newly arrived in Jerusalem, or still living in a village, Jeremiah would not have been among the city's social elite.

When king Josiah launched his policy for political and cultic unification of what had been the Northern Kingdom of Israel with the Kingdom of Judah it seems that Jeremiah gave him his full support (31:26-28). However, when Josiah died and Jehoiakim became king Jeremiah's attitude toward the king changed drastically. It would seem that it was around the time of the battle of Carchemish in 609 BCE that he delivered his famous sermon against the temple (ch. 7), which made him a pariah both at the Court and with most of the people. Ever since, Jeremiah was a most controversial figure. He undoubtedly became an outsider who, as he moans in his confessions "sat alone" (15:17). In a society in which communal life is the norm, becoming ostracized was rather cruel punishment, maybe even more painful than the actual imprisonment Jeremiah also experienced more than once.

What catches our attention, however, is that Jeremiah always had friends in Court. We know that a prophet by the name of Uriah from Kiriath-jearim had delivered prophecies similar to Jeremiah's during the reign of the same king Jehoiakim with very different results. He escaped to Egypt, but that did not save him. The king had him brought from Egypt, slew him, and dishonored him in burial (26:20-23). In the case of Jeremiah, however, Ahikam the son of Shaphan is credited with having prevented his death at the hands of the people (26:24). Certainly Ahikam

¹ See John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1922).

must have been an influential courtier, but we know next to nothing about him.²

The book of Jeremiah mentions Baruch, the scribe a few times (36:26, 32). In 1970 James Muilenburg argued that he was not just a scribe who sat at the gate hoping to get some work, but one who had been trained at court and was a royal scribe.³ His argument has been more or less confirmed by the discovery of a bulla (the impression left by a personal seal) in a royal archive which reads: "Belonging to Berekhiah, son of Neriah, the scribe."⁴ Since Berakhiah is the long form of Baruch, and both the same patronym (32:12 gives him a double patronym) and the same professional description are given, it would seem that this bulla belonged to the Baruch we know as Jeremiah's scribe, and that he had excellent credentials. It was already known that his brother Seraiah was the quartermaster of king Zedekiah (51:59), and no doubt a court-trained scribe as well. This means that Baruch belonged to a family of scribes with good connections at the royal palace.⁵

On the basis of the above, I would like to suggest that Baruch was not just Jeremiah's occasional amanuensis. The evidence is quite strong, and many have already recognized this, that theirs was not just an occasional professional relationship. They were, no doubt about it, good friends. I would like to suggest that he was not only Jeremiah's scribe and friend, but actually his mentor.

Several things point in this direction. We may start by pointing out that when the scroll, containing the first set of prophecies of Jeremiah, was read by Baruch to some courtiers, they advised him immediately that he and Jeremiah should go into hiding. And a bit latter when the scroll was read to the king by one of the courtiers and the king cut the scroll and burned it in the fireplace, he commanded the arrest of both Jeremiah and Baruch (36:10, 26). It does not appear that Baruch was being arrested for having been the unlucky amanuensis of some oracles of judgment. His deeper association with Jeremiah was well known and, since Baruch had read the scroll at the temple and before the courtiers (35:10, 14-16), the king recognized him as a promoter of Jeremiah. At the next critical moment, when he is taken to Egypt by Johanan and his band of insurrectionists, Jeremiah does not go alone. Baruch goes with him (43:3, 6). Was he going as his humble servant, or as the one who had cast his lot with him?

It is commonly recognized that Baruch was the one who edited the book of Jeremiah, and probably wrote significant portions of it. Scholars have identified three types of materials in the book: poetic oracles, biographical narratives and sermonic prose. Most scholars have identified the sermonic prose as originating with

² Gemariah, the son of Shaphan (is Gemariah Ahikam's brother?), is identified as the secretary whose chamber was "in the upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the Lord's house" (36:10).

³ "Baruch the Scribe," in J. I. Durham and J. R. Porter (eds). *Proclamation and Presence* (Richmond. Knox, 1970), pp. 213-238.

⁴ N. Avigad, "Baruch the Scribe and Jerahmeel the King's Son," *Israel Exploration Journal* 28 (1978), pp. 52-56.

⁵ J. R. Lundbom, "Baruch, Seraiah, and Expanded Colophons in the Book of Jeremiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36 (1986) pp. 89-114.

Deuteronomic editors, the poetic oracles as coming from Jeremiah and the biographical narratives as the work of Baruch (especially 26-29; 36-45 [except 44:1-14] and 51:59-64). This seems to be most likely the case when more or less the same thing is said both in poetic and in narrative form. Thus 7:30-34 reappears as narrative in 19:1-20:6, and 7:1-15 in ch.26. Moreover, chapters 19 and 26 to 29, as well as 36 to 45 (with some exceptions) are considered the work of Baruch. The long narrative of the final month of Jeremiah's career that ends in Egypt is confidently attributed to him, even if some expansions may have been done afterward by others. W. L. Holladay, who credits the sermonic prose to Jeremiah rather than to Deuteronomic editors, still has to account for the obvious Deuteronomic style of these texts. His solution is to say that the "gist" of the sermons is Jeremiah's even if the one who framed the message in "contemporary" style was Baruch. In this way he credits Baruch not only for the biographical narrative but also the editorial style of the sermonic prose.⁶

We also know that at the beginning of his association with Jeremiah, Baruch received a word of the Lord concerning his disappointment with his lack-luster career. At this time he was rebuked for being concerned with his career when the whole nation was doomed, but at the same time he received the assurance that he would have "his life as a prize of war" (45:4-5). It would seem, then, that his association with Jeremiah meant a rather dramatic shift in his life that put an end to his budding prophetic career.

Baruch also took part in another one of Jeremiah's most significant prophetic activities: the redemption of a piece of property in Anathoth which belonged to his uncle. This action was to be a sign of the future restoration of the nation. Not only did Baruch serve as a witness to the transaction, but he was also entrusted with the title deed and instructed to place it in an earthenware jar for safekeeping over many years (32). Since at the time Jeremiah "was shut up in the court of the guard which was in the palace of the king of Judah" and "the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem" (32:2), one may wonder whether Jeremiah could have managed this feat without the help of a well-connected mentor. In reference to another crucial incident, one may also legitimately ask whether Jeremiah could have interrupted the Conference which king Zedekiah was having in Jerusalem with the ambassadors of the neighboring kings, without being challenged, if he had not had a worthy mentor (ch. 27).

Posterity recognized the significance that Baruch had during his lifetime, particularly as Jeremiah's scribe, companion, advisor, and sponsor. The authors of apocryphal literature found in Baruch a compelling figure. He was a man who was educated with the best, others could depend on, commanded the respect of people in high position, and bridged the difference between prophecy and scholarship. He was considered another Daniel, or another Ezra. One who stood between the prophets and the scribes. As such he was recognized as the one responsible for the whole of the Jeremiah tradition. The *Book of Baruch* includes the Letter of Jeremiah, as well as a letter of Baruch to the people still in Jerusalem. The *Paraleipomena Jeremiou*

⁶ William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), p. 15.

explicitly credits Baruch as its author. Besides there is *Second (Syriac) Baruch*, and *Third (Greek) Baruch*, both written after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. These books enjoyed great popularity among Christians who preserved them and translated them at least into Ethiopic, Armenian, Old Church Slavonic and Romanian, as far as we can tell. The Ethiopic version of *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* titles the work *The Rest of the Words of Baruch*. In other words, the figure of Baruch must have impressed his contemporaries and continued to fire the imagination of all those who found Jeremiah to be a singularly important prophet, particularly Christians.

Reading the book of Jeremiah, however, one does not find Baruch calling attention to himself. As I have suggested above, he could have claimed credit for a number of significant accomplishments. Instead he seems to have adopted the ministry of Jeremiah as the one he was going to serve. In terms of social standing there is no doubt that his was higher than Jeremiah's. Since the biographical narratives do no include an account of Jeremiah's death, we may assume that Baruch died first. This allows us to think that Baruch was not only Jeremiah's superior socially but also his senior chronologically. He gave the prophet access to the court, even at the peril of his own life, and ultimately shared the prophet's exile to a foreign land where he would not have the company of the bulk of the Jewish exiles. He had been his mentor in life, reading at the temple the initial Jeremiah scroll, supporting him within the higher social circles, helping him to return to Anathoth to buy his uncle's field, and making it possible for him to interrupt the Jerusalem Conference of foreign ambassadors. Of him it can be said, paraphrasing John the Baptist, that he was happy to keep a low profile so that his protege might increase. More significantly, by compiling his oracles, editing the gist of his sermons and supplementing these materials with biographical narratives he made sure that the Wisdom that had sustained the nation at a critical moment in its history was not lost for the next generation, which, after all, is the paradigmatic function of the mentor.

Resumen

El autor sugiere, y ofrece pruebas para demostrarlo, que Baruc fue mentor de Jeremías, y que no fue un mero amanuense. Probablemente Baruc tenía más contactos en la corte que Jeremías, además de ser mayor que el profeta. Utilizó todo esto para servir de mentor y protector de Jeremías, y para asegurarse de que la sabiduría que sustentó a la nación en un momento crítico de su historia quedó para las generaciones posteriores. Es precisamente en eso que consiste la función de la mentoría.

Luke 1:39-56: Mary's Visit to Elizabeth as a Biblical Instance of Mentoring

Jean-Pierre Ruiz

At first glance, my selection of this text as a biblical example of mentoring may seem a bit of a stretch. Just a few lines set the scene. Presenting Mary's hurried response to the angelic announcement of her relative's pregnancy. The sparseness of verses 39-40 itself suggests the speed with which the younger woman went to fulfill the obligations of kinship towards Elizabeth. The conclusion of the scene (v. 56) tells us only of the duration of Mary's stay, revealing nothing further of what transpired between them during those three months. The scene itself (vv. 39-56) presents but a single encounter and a single exchange of words between them: first Elizabeth's Spirit-imbued exclamation (vv. 42-45); then Mary's response in song (vv. 46-55), the Magnificat.

As for the exchange of word and song between the two women, the very brevity of the introduction to the Magnificat (v. 46) is itself complicated by the evidence of a few Latin manuscripts in which the canticle is ascribed to Elizabeth and not Mary.¹ Though the manuscript tradition overwhelmingly supports the attribution of the canticle to Mary and not to Elizabeth, the minority reading underlines how very little in the canticle is particular to Mary, and how very little the canticle seems (at first glance) to serve as a specific and appropriate response to Elizabeth's words to Mary.

Redactional studies of Luke 1:39-56 have suggested that Mary's canticle (vv. 46-56) was added at a second moment in the Lukan composition of this scene, and that the narrative of the encounter originally moved directly from verse 45 to verse 56. Thus it is posited that the earlier abbreviated form of the text served as a conclusion to the announcement of the birth of Jesus, with Elizabeth's pregnancy validating the angel's words in v. 36. In its present condition and position, placed between the parallel announcements of the birth of John the Baptist (1:5-21) and of Jesus (1:26-38) and the parallel narratives of the birth of John the Baptist (1:57-66) and of Jesus (2:1-7), the visitation, as this text is traditionally known, marks a major moment in the Lukan infancy narrative, presenting the first encounter between the one who would baptize with water and the one who would baptize with fire.

The presentation of this text thus far would appear to confirm the initial impression that Luke 1:39-56 has little relevance for a discussion of mentoring. Even prescinding from the text's redactional and traditional challenges, several mysteries need to be unraveled, and I propose that such unravelings will eventually dispel that

¹See Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed. (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 334-336.

impression.² First of all, it is difficult to determine which of the two women is the mentor and which is the protégée in this scene. Mary, the younger woman, rushes to the home of Elizabeth upon receiving the news of her own and her relative's pregnancy. We are not specifically told whether she goes to seek advice with respect to her own situation, or whether she goes to offer assistance to her relative during the last three months of the older woman's pregnancy.

In this regard, matters are not immediately clarified by Elizabeth's words to Mary. Within the frame of the two blessings she pronounces upon Mary (*eulogēmenē* [v. 42] and *makaria* [v. 45]), Elizabeth wonders aloud about the significance of Mary's visit (v. 43: "why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?") and gives testimony to her son's first exuberant testimony to Jesus (v. 44: "as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy"). Nor do Mary's words, at first, establish any clear delineation of the women's roles as mentor and protégée.

Perhaps this lack of clarity suggests that, in some measure, *both* women are mentors and *both* are protégées. Mary rushes to the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah to provide what help she can, *and* to seek her older relative's sage advice. Elizabeth welcomes Mary into her home, recognizes the privilege her presence represents, and in words of blessing advises her relative to remain firm in the stance of active attention to God's word that has brought her to this moment (v. 45: "blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.").

Elizabeth's words here underline a key feature of the relationship between mentor and protégée, namely, the importance of listening. It is Elizabeth's attentive listening to Mary's words of greeting that sets off the unborn John the Baptist's joyful leap, and Elizabeth herself utters a blessing that underlines the close connection between faith and attention to God's word (a connection Jesus himself emphasizes in Luke 8:21: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."). Relationships between mentors and protégés build upon the trust that arises from effective communication. Here Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words about ministers may be seen to apply to mentors equally well. Bonhoeffer wrote that "Ministers so often think that they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others; they forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking."³

The encounter between Mary and Elizabeth likewise underlines the place of key life transitions in the relationship between mentor and protégée. The two women's shared experience of pregnancy extends the bonds of kinship between them. While the experience is proper to each and while neither can shoulder the other's

²These informal reflections proceed with little attention to the important diachronic concerns of composition and redaction, following instead a synchronic approach at least partially shaped though the insights of contemporary narrative critical approaches to the Bible.

³Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper, 1954) 97.

responsibilities, the communication between them that the single reported exchange symbolizes provides sustenance, strength and support to both, breaking the isolation that would bar each of them from entering into the deepest possible understanding of themselves and of the course of their lives. What they share in common provides the ground for their conversation, leading each to an enriched understanding of her self and to a more finely focused sense of purpose.

Turning to consider Mary's response to Elizabeth in 1:46-55, I would suggest that the Magnificat supports the characterization of Mary both as mentor *and* as protégée. Read in view of Mary's role as mentor, the Magnificat invites Elizabeth to expand her horizons, taking into account the great traditions of her people's past, understood as God's saving action on behalf of those who are downtrodden. As mentor here, Mary redirects Elizabeth's attention from the meaning of this visit *for her* (v. 43) to the larger implications of this moment in their personal history as a key moment in the history of the entire people. Thus Mary invites Elizabeth to understand the present in the light of the past, challenging her to shape her hope according to God's consistent record of the sort of life-giving intervention on behalf of those whom this world's powers marginalize. As mentor, Mary knows the literature: the Magnificat is full of allusions to the Psalms and to other texts from Israel's ancient religious traditions, texts which Mary employs deftly in order to illuminate the present.⁴ On the other hand, when read as an expression of Mary's self-understanding as protégée, the Magnificat might be seen to reflect the confident self-understanding of a protégée whose relationship with her mentor is such that it leads her to speak with full trust and confidence, daring to disclose information that renders her vulnerable.

The concluding indication that Mary remained with Elizabeth three months need not be read simply as a failure to disclose the daily give-and-take of what transpired between them, suggests that the relationship between mentor and protégé is one that develops patiently, taking its time as a matter of accompaniment, not as a single simple intervention.

Resumen

Mediante un cuidadoso estudio sincrónico del pasaje bíblico, el autor explora la relación entre María y Elizabet en términos de mentora y pupila. Lo notable es que es difícil determinar en toda esta narración quién es la mentora y quién la pupila--quién enseña y apoya, y quién aprende y recibe apoyo. A partir de este punto, el autor explora algunas de las dimensiones más profundas de la relación entre el mentor y su pupilo.

⁴See Brown's *The Birth of the Messiah*, 358-360, "Table XII: The Background of the Magnificat."

Naomi and Ruth: A Model for Mentors

Francisco O. García-Treto

Goddesses as Mentors, and Angels in Disguise

If we take seriously at face value the derivation of the name "mentor," we discover an inconsistency which, in fact, often poses a problem in real-life mentoring situations. The Mentor of Homer's *Odyssey* is a respected and wise Ithacan elder, but the Mentor who acts as young Telemachus' advisor in the perilous rite of passage he undergoes as he attempts to step into his absent father's shoes is, in fact, not the venerable old nobleman, but the goddess Athena disguised as him. The famous scene in Book II of the *Odyssey* begins, in fact, with Telemachus' prayer to Athena, who appears to him looking and sounding like Mentor to advise, encourage and assist him in his quest. All this is well and good for Telemachus, but it raises a serious question about the relevance of the image to real mentoring situations. A recent televised version of the *Odyssey* illustrates this well: Isabella Rossellini's skillful portrayal of Athena, precisely because it was true to the spirit of Homer's work, presented the goddess as basically detached from the affairs of humankind in which she intervened, almost as if she were playing a game for her own amusement. Lest we think that the "goddess as Mentor" motif is exclusive to Homer, however, we can easily find its like in the biblical -- or at least in the deuterocanonical -- literature which represents the Jewish root of our culture just as Homer stands for the Hellenic.

In the book of *Tobit*, the same motif is present in a version that may be called the "angel in disguise" variant of mentoring. Tobias's quandary, like that of Telemachus, is that of the young person forced by circumstance (the absence or the disability of the father) to step into a role for which he is not quite ready, and carry out a difficult and dangerous task on which hinges his survival, and that of his entire family. Charged by his blind father Tobit to travel to faraway Media and recover a large sum of money -- the family's only remaining wealth -- from a kinsman with whom it had long ago been left in trust, young Tobias answers:

I will do everything that you have commanded me, father; but how can I obtain the money from him, since he does not know me and I do not know him? ... Also, I do not know the roads to Media, or how to get there (*Tobit* 5:1-2, NRSV).

The companion and guide which Tobias hires for his journey, who appears to him in the guise of a young man called Azariah, is in actuality the Angel Raphael. Like Athena disguised as Mentor, Azariah/Raphael has superhuman knowledge and insight, which he uses to help Tobias in ways which, while they work to great and positive effect, remain more akin to magic than to mentoring.

Take, for example, the chain of events which begins with the fish's attack by the River Tigris in Chapter 6. The fish attacked Tobias, who at Azariah's urging

grabbed it and threw it on land, where it not only provided a meal for them, but most importantly, its gall, heart and liver, which Azariah tells Tobias "are useful as medicine" (6:5). Not at all coincidentally, the gall is the cure for precisely the sort of blindness which affects Tobit, and the liver and heart will be the means to banish a demon which Tobias is not yet aware that he will have to face. Azariah, in fact, is the one who makes Tobias aware of the plight of Sarah, daughter of yet another of Tobias' Median kinsmen, a "sensible, bright and very beautiful" (and wealthy) girl. She is indeed the perfect bride for Tobias, but there is a huge problem to be overcome. Sarah is afflicted by the "demon lover" syndrome, a common motif in Eastern folklore, in which a demon is attracted to a young woman and, being by nature unable to consummate his desire for her, kills instead any man who would become her husband, as indeed had already happened seven(!) times to Sarah. The mentoring angel explains the procedure Tobias is to follow, burning the reserved fish heart and liver to make a smoke that will banish the demon from the bridal chamber forever. Needless to say, the story glides along from this point to a happy ending, with the inevitability of a fairytale. Tobias returns home safe and sound to heal his father's blindness, present his lovely rich bride to his parents and deliver the long-entrusted money. As in a fairytale ending, they all lived happily ever after.

It could be argued that Azariah/Raphael carries out the functions of a mentor to Tobias admirably and successfully. After all, he turns peril into opportunity (the fish, the demon), equips him with material means (fish entrails) and the useful, albeit magical, knowledge of their use, points out new opportunities that Tobias had not imagined (Sarah, the healing of Tobit's blindness), and because of his intervention everything ends happily. And yet, something rings hollow -- like Rosellini's Athena, Raphael does not -- cannot -- really identify with the mortal he helps. As he says, at the end confessing the profound docetic flaw in his relationship with Tobias (12:18, 19) : "If I have been with you, it was not because I wanted it, but because God so disposed it ... When you saw me eat and drink, it was not really me you were seeing but a vision."

Human, all-too-Human Mentors

One of the articles which we read in preparation for the Mentor Empowerment Weekend which originated these reflections¹ led me to consider Erik Erikson's concept of "generativity" as the key both to an understanding of what is really missing in the "mentoring" of Athena or of Raphael, and to see in the *Book of Ruth* a model of a real, human, non-docetic alternative. Stevens refers to Erikson's model of eight developmental life stages, specifically to the seventh stage, which Erikson defined as centered on the need to find ways to express generativity over against the constant possibility of stagnation, a choice typically encountered in mid- or late life. While stagnation, characterized by being "self-indulgent or self-absorbed"

1 Nancy H. Stevens, "R and R for Mentors: Renewal and Reaffirmation for Mentors as Benefits from the Mentoring Experience" educational *Horizons*, Spring 1995, pp. 130-137.

leads to personality regression, and to a crisis stage where "the individual feels emotionally and intellectually grounded,"² generativity focuses instead on nurturing and caring for the next generation, a move which serves the needs not only of the young protégé, but also of the older mentor. Stevens again: "mentoring is a matching of two personalities at particular life stages. This match can promote growth and satisfaction in both individuals by meeting the needs each has: the younger individual receiving needed support and guidance, and the older individual meeting the generative need to nurture and share with the next generation."³ I propose to use this model as a guide to reading the *Book of Ruth* as a case study in generatively-driven mentoring: Naomi's role as Ruth's mentor serves to meet urgent needs for both the older and the younger woman.

Mara/Naomi and Ruth

The double name of the mentor, a feature found in the text itself (see *Ruth* 1:20, 21), serves to highlight the crisis of stagnation versus generativity in which she finds herself at the beginning of the book. In the patriarchal, peasant society which forms the world of the story of *Ruth*, the central element of successful generativity is the production of offspring: the continuation of the family lines into the future being the paramount goal. Naomi's speeches to her daughters-in-law in 1:8-13 and to the women of Bethlehem in 1:20, 21 make clear that economic destitution is not the central problem: loss or lack of progeny is. Naomi had left Bethlehem with her husband and two sons as famine-driven refugees, the poorest of the poor, and yet she refers to that flight as "I went away full" in verse 21. Full, because she had two sons, and thus the promise of future generations with her. Now, however, that promise has been cruelly negated for her with the death, not only of her husband and of her sons, but of the sons without progeny. "Call me no longer Naomi ("pleasant"), call me Mara ("bitter"), for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me" she complains, "I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty." In this, and in the dark, self-deprecating humor of the reflection on the closing of opportunity with the passing of time, and of time of life, included in her speech to Ruth and Orpah (11b-13), Naomi/Mara shows herself as a mentor, or better a potential mentor, reduced to despair and depression by a vision without any hope. Her advice to the two younger women to leave her and go back to their families is predicated on her perception that they are still capable of bearing children, and thus potentially marriageable. The childless death of her sons, their husbands, has, Naomi believes, cut off the bond between them. While in her opinion the younger women can start over again among their own people, for her life is quite literally over. There is for Naomi no magic cure or divine intervention -- as there is in Sarah's story -- to circumvent the paralyzing reality of finding herself childless and past the age for

2 Stevens, 131.

3 Ibid.

childbearing. Naomi as Mara becomes an emblem for mentorial burn-out, for the conviction that one has nothing left to give: "turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?" (11).

Ironically, the hope that Naomi denies having is staring her in the face, while in her despair she cannot recognize it. Ruth's well-known speech in verses 16 and 17 establishes a claim upon Naomi, a claim which reaffirms the bond between them, at the same time that it forces on her the obligation of leading Ruth to a foreign land and being her mentor in the ways of her people and of her God: "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (16b). As they leave Moab for Bethlehem, the two women are unaware of one of the customs of Naomi's people, one of the laws of her God, which will make possible the story's happy ending. Ruth the Moabite does not know, and Naomi the Judean seems in her depression to have forgotten, the possibility of recourse to the *go'el* system of family obligations, which is going in the end to provide an elegant solution to their desperate situation.

From the low point of Naomi's pathetic "call me Mara" speech upon their arrival in Bethlehem, the story climbs steadily to its conclusion in praise and rejoicing. What drives the plot in this section is a pattern woven from Ruth's "outside" activity in the fields and Naomi's "inside" interpretation and guidance of that activity. In other words, Ruth acts and Naomi becomes her mentor. Ruth has the initiative to go out and glean behind the reapers, and the energy and industry to be noticed for her diligent work. Naomi has the insight to recognize in the unusually large amount of grain she brings home the first day another factor: a man has taken notice of Ruth, and the knowledge of Bethlehem's lineages to recognize the name of Boaz as that of "one of our *go'els*" (NRSV "of our nearest kin" in 2:20). A previously overlooked possibility has opened up, and Naomi is clearly the one who recognizes it. And, having read the signs of Boaz's growing attraction for Ruth correctly, she is the one who advises Ruth to take the bold, daring initiative (3:1-4) which puts her in Boaz's bed and precipitates the happy conclusion of the tale. There is no magic at work here -- the operating force is an old woman's insight into the ways of the heart (see also 3:16-18). While it is clear that Naomi is acting on Ruth's behalf and in her daughter-in-law's interest (see 3:1, for example), it is also evident that Naomi benefits immensely. The one who once felt that God had dealt harshly and bitterly with her begins to utter blessings (2:19, 20, for example) as soon as the recognition that a new possibility has dawned brings her out of her self-imposed isolation. The last scene of the book is very revealing in this sense. While of course Obed is Ruth and Boaz's baby, that is treated almost as an incidental fact (4:13). The real celebration which concludes the story is that which the women of the town address to Naomi (4:14-17): "Blessed be the LORD ... A son has been born to Naomi."

Before the same audience, Naomi once served as an emblem of burn-out and depression. Now she is again emblematic, but this time of the successful mentor,

whose double commitment to the advancement of her protégée and to the continuation of the family tradition which contained both of them has resulted in her own needs being bountifully served. She comes to choose generativity over stagnation, as Erikson would say, and in doing so she grows, or as the *Book of Ruth* puts it, she is no longer childless: she bears a son.

The possibility of being angels in disguise, and much less all-powerful deities in human form, is not open to us as mentors of the next generation of Hispanic/Latino scholars and teachers. What we have to emulate is the much better model which Naomi symbolizes. Out of our commitment and our experience, but also out of our marginalization and our need, must grow our nurturing and fostering of the young who claim us. In a real sense, their successes will be our offspring and, as Gloria Estefan's words put it "¡Que siga la tradición!"

Resumen

El caso paradigmático del cual el término «mentor» recibe su nombre no es muy útil para nuestra situación presente, pues el Mentor de la epopeya homérica es en realidad la diosa Atenea, y no el personaje humano que aparenta ser. Una diosa o dios encarnado--o peor aun, encarnado de forma docética--no es un paradigma muy útil ni productivo al explorar la función del mentor hoy. Tampoco nos ayuda el paradigma de Tobías y Azarías, pues este último no es sino el medio a través del cual el ángel Rafael actúa en beneficio de Tobias--y en todo caso, más que servirle de mentor, le sirve de protector que le resuelve todos sus problemas, a veces por artimañas mágicas. Más útil es el paradigma de Noemí y Ruth, en el que tanto la una como la otra encuentran fruición. Noemí es la mentora de Ruth, y con ello no sólo ayuda a Ruth, sino que ella misma se realiza al cumplir, a través de Ruth y de sus logros, su propio impulso generativo.

Koheleth and the Mythical Imagery of Mentoring

Luis N. Rivera-Pagán

Mentor, avatar of Athena

The terms "mentor" and "mentoring" have a prestigious classical mythical genealogy. According to Homer's second great epic poem, Mentor is comrade-in-arms of Odysseus, whom the legendary hero leaves in charge of his affairs in Ithaca, while he sails to avenge the blemished Greek honor in distant Troy. The most important task of Mentor is the princely education of Telemachus, son of Odysseus. At some crucial junctures of *The Odyssey*, Mentor intervenes in a decisive role as advisor to Telemachus or to his friend Odysseus. Mentor is, in all those occasions, an avatar of the goddess Palla Athena. His words and actions are veiled hierophanies.

Mentor, as the incarnation of Athena, inspires the forlorn young prince to courage and wisdom in his determination to find his lost father and face the suitors who try to usurp the place of Odysseus.

Athena came to his prayer from close at hand,
for all the world with Mentor's build and voice,
and she urged him with winging words: "Telemachus,
you'll lack neither courage nor sense from this day on,
not if your father's spirit courses through your veins-
now there was a man, I'd say, in words and action both..."¹

Telemachus confronts a significant rite de passage. He must become a warrior, a defender of his patriarchal honor and household. Thus, Mentor insists that it is the time to be strong and to avoid the temptation of compassionate kindness towards his enemies. The role model should be his father, Odysseus, brave in battle and cunning in strategy, the one who, according to *The Odyssey*, designed the famed wooden horse used to subjugate finally the obstinate Trojan adversaries. The advisor is Mentor. He is the one who from time to time, as the divine voice of the belligerent daughter of Zeus, seeks to strengthen the heart of Telemachus. He departs with him, sharing the perils of the sea, guiding him in the project of finding Odysseus.

And Mentor took command - I saw him climb aboard -
or a god who looked like Mentor head to foot...²

At the dangerous climax of the violent confrontation between Odysseus and

¹ Homer, *The Odyssey* (translated by Robert Fagles). New York and London: Viking, 1996), pp. 101s [2: 300-305].

² Ibid., p. 145 [4: 734f].

Telemachus and their enemies, Mentor, once more as the avatar of Athena, plays a decisive role. He "kept on testing Odysseus and his gallant son, putting their force and fighting heart to proof..."³

The triumph is to be obtained by Odysseus and Telemachus; by their intelligence, imagination, and strength. Yet the inspiration provided by Mentor/Athena is of extreme importance. Without such a stimulus the result might have been different, and Odysseus would have probably shared the tragic end of so many Greek heroes, decided by the gods as a retribution for their blasphemous violation of the sacred codes after the conquest of Troy [a version of the divine decree of punishment can be read in Euripides' *The Trojan Women*]. It is always convenient to have a goddess like Athena at our side! It should be noted that both Homeric epic poems are embedded in an aristocratic and patriarchal worldview.⁴

The Odyssey has been the object of allegorical readings for at least twenty-five centuries, and Odysseus' travails have been many times understood as a metaphor of the journey of the soul in search of its true identity or "home". The purpose of Mentor has thus also been transformed, from that of a teacher of the virtues of a virile warrior and hero, to the divine sage that guides the spiritual adventure of the human soul (something akin to the metamorphosis performed by the apostle Paul to another wanderer, Abraham), one not lacking in many hardships and asperities.

Utanapishtim and Gilgamesh, the fate of mortality

Jasper Griffin has made a critical observation to the otherwise excellent and erudite introduction of Bernard Knox to Robert Fagles' translation of *The Odyssey*: the lack of reference to the travels and adventures of Gilgamesh, the legendary Mesopotamian prince.⁵

Gilgamesh, as Odysseus, has to face a destiny of a perilous journey and unknown dangers:

I must face fighting such as I have not known,
and I must travel on a road that I do not know!⁶

Like the Greek hero, Gilgamesh' virtues are those befitting a brave and wise prince:

³ Ibid., p. 446 [22: 248f].

⁴ The aristocratic perspective of the Homeric books is clearly manifest in the derisory and abusive way in which Thersites, a commoner, is treated by Odysseus when he dares to argue against continuing the Trojan war. Homer, *The Iliad* (translated by Robert Fagles). New York and London: Viking, 1990), pp. 106ff [2: 245-324].

⁵ Jasper Griffin, "Bringing Homer Home," *The New York Review of Books*, November 28, 1996, p. 55.

⁶ *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (translated, with an Introduction and Notes by Maureen Gallery Kovacs). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989, p. 25.

Gilgamesh is the bravest of the men,
the boldest of the males!⁷

In his travel towards his mysterious destiny Gilgamesh can count with the assistance of Enkidu, a kind of wild man devoted by the elders to the defense of the prince:

Enkidu will protect the friend,
will keep the comrade safe.⁸

Enkidu however gives Gilgamesh a different lesson, an unexpected one. He awakens in the young prince the awareness of mortality, first by telling him a dream laden with dark forebodings, and then by the example of his own death.

Listen, my friend, to the dream that I had last night.
The heavens cried out and the earth replied,
and I was standing between them.
There appeared a man of dark visage-
his face resembled the Anzu,
his hands were the paws of a lion,
his nails the talons of an eagle...

Seizing me, he led me down to the House of Darkness,
the dwelling of Irkalla,
to the House where those who enter do not come out,
along the road of no return,
to the House where those who dwell do without light...
they dwell in the dark...⁹

Enkidu reveals, through this divinely inspired dream, not only that death is the unavoidable fate of human flesh, but also, and more poignantly, that it is the destiny also of the aristocratic and courtly class of human beings to which Gilgamesh belongs. Thus, Gilgamesh's fate is also tragically decreed by the gods! He will also die. He discovers the same truth that will strike centuries later Gautama Buda - the empire of death:

On entering the House of Dust,
everywhere I looked
there were royal crowns gathered in heaps,
everywhere I listened,
it was the bearers of crowns

⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 64f.

who in the past ruled the land...¹⁰

The death of Enkidu darkens the heart of Gilgamesh, who grief-stricken laments the death of his close friend in a manner that closely remembers the mourning of Achilles for Patroclus, and that of David for Jonathan.

Homer narrates the clamorous grief of Achilles, as strong as his famous rage with which *The Iliad* begins. Before Achilles burns in a sacramental pyre the cadaver of Patroclus and that of twelve captive Trojans soldiers, he is warned by his friend in a dream that death will also be Achilles' destiny.

Grim death,
that death assigned from the day that I was born
has spread its hateful jaws to take me down.
And you too,
your fate awaits you too, godlike as you are, Achilles -
to die in battle beneath the proud rich Trojans' walls!¹¹

David also cries out aloud over the body of Jonathan, killed in battle by the Philistines, in bitter words and tears:

I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother;
you were most dear to me;
your love for me was wonderful,
surpassing the love of women.¹²

The dream and death of Enkidu acutely makes Gilgamesh aware of the precariousness of his own flesh.

I am going to die! - am I not like Enkidu?!
Deep sadness penetrates my core...¹³

His journey is transformed into a quest for immortality. He looks out for Utanapishtim, the legendary king who had survived the great Flood, has been given eternal life by the gods, and lives at the Mouth of the Rivers, at the end of the earth.

I have come on account of my ancestor Utanapishtim,
who joined the Assembly of the Gods,
and was given eternal life.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *The Iliad*, p. 562 [23: 94-98].

¹² *II Samuel* 1: 26 (*The Revised English Bible*. London: Oxford University Press & Cambridge University Press, 1989). These verses have given cause to several gay readings, from both academic and literary perspectives.

¹³ *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, p. 75.

About Death and Life I must ask him!¹⁴

Enkidu has shown Gilgamesh that death is the allotted fate of humankind, Utanapishtim will teach him to accept it with courage and wisdom.

You have toiled without cease,
and what have you got?

Through toil you wear yourself out,
you fill your body with grief,
your long lifetime you are bringing near (to a premature end)!

Mankind, whose offshoot is snapped off like a reed in a cane break,
the fine youth and lovely girl

. . . death.

No one can see death,
no one can hear the voice of death,
yet there savage death that snaps off mankind...

(Yes, you are a) human being, a man!

After Enlil had pronounced the blessing,
the Annunaki, the Great Gods, assembled.

Mammentum, she who fashions destiny,
determined destiny with them.

They established Death and Life...¹⁵

And yet, Gilgamesh, having learned from his two "mentors" the secret of the gods, that death prevails upon humankind, achieves immortality in the poetic text that is able to transcend the borders of time and space and seduce and fascinate modern (as well as some postmodern) readers. In fact it is the poem, rather than the wall of Uruk that preserves the memory of Gilgamesh, his journey towards himself, and the story of his dialogues with Enkidu and Utanapishtim.

The *tlamatinime*, the pleasures of the earth

Mentor and Utanapishtim fulfill the role of the traditional elder, who by means of words and deeds guides the formation of young people like Telemachus or Gilgamesh, in the context of patriarchal and aristocratic societies. The Native American societies also had their elders, wise-men, or "mentors"; for example, the *amautas*, of the Andes, or the *tlamatinime* [plural of *tlamatini*], in the *náhuatl* context. The Franciscan Friar Bernardino de Sahagún composed his *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* to assist in the process of exterminating the native

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 92ff.

"idolatries".¹⁶ Yet, though he began collecting the old *náhuatl* traditions from a rather inquisitorial and crusading spirit, he was honest and clear-headed enough to overcome that initial viewpoint. At the end of his text, he was unable to hide his admiration towards the way the young people were mentored before the conquest by the native elders [this was probably the main reason why his text had to wait till the independence of Mexico to be published].

Eduardo Galeano offers a beautiful example of the kind of advice or mentoring that the *tlamatinime* gave the young people who begin to face the aporias and sorrows of human existence.

Now that you see with your eyes,
take notice.
See how it is here: there is no joy,
there is no happiness.

Here on earth is the place of many tears,
the place where breath gives up...

But even though it were thus,
though it were true that suffering is all...
must we always go with fear?
must we forever tremble?
must we live forever weeping?¹⁷

This description of the bitterness and sadness of human life is typical of the melancholic character of the *nahuatl* philosophy, which tends to stress the vulnerability of existence, human and cosmic.¹⁸ Yet the advice given by the *tlamatinime* uses this somber description as a background for courage and the pursuit if not of happiness, at least of pleasure.

So that we may not always go with groans,
so that sadness may not ever saturate us,
Our Father has given us
smiles, dreams, food,

¹⁶ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*. México, D. F.: Porrúa, 1985. Sahagún believes that under the worship of the Virgen de la Guadalupe there might be a veiled continuation of the veneration of the Tonantzin. Ibid., p. 705.

¹⁷ Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire, I. Genesis* (translated by Cedric Belfrage). New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), pp. 130f.

¹⁸ Cf. Miguel León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl, estudiada en sus fuentes*. México, D. F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1979. There is an English translation of an earlier edition: *Aztec Thought and Culture; a Study of Ancient Nahuatl Mind* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).

our strength,
and finally
the act of love
which sows people.¹⁹

The elder confront the young with the contingency of existence. Yet this does not necessarily leads towards a pessimistic outlook. It becomes an inspiration to derive joy from earthly pleasures, from the "flowers and songs" (*in xóchitl in cuicatl*), the poetry of life and love ("the act of love which sows people"). One could even detect, according to Miguel León-Portilla, in these *náhuatl* texts a tendency towards an Epicurean existential attitude. Contingency, poetry, pleasure, solidarity, and courage to face death. A society on the verge of a cataclysmic tragedy, soon to be crashed by the violence of invasion and conquest, expresses the beauty of its spirit in the poetry of its elders, in its "flowers and songs".

***Koheleth*, the ways of the wise**

One of the most quoted, and still one of the most enigmatic books in the Old Testament canon is *Koheleth*, or *Ecclesiastes*. Who is this strange figure? In the context of these rather disjointed reflections, whose object is to dance around the mythical imagery of mentoring, we might take him as an elder/advisor, in a role similar to that of Homer's Mentor to Telemachus, of the Sumerian Utanapishtim to Gilgamesh or of the Mexican *tlataminime* with respect to the young Aztec warriors.

Koheleth's famous first verse has become, in diverse languages, the epitome of an attitude that pendulates between irony and cynicism:

Futility, utter futility...
everything is futile.²⁰

Koheleth, as the elder, as the mentor of the young, faces the same challenging task of the *tlataminime*, or of Utanapishtim: to poetically illustrate the contingency and sorrows of human existence, while at the same time inspiring the hearers to wisdom, courage and joy. Always at the verge of cynicism, irony prevails in the biblical preacher. It is present in another of *Koheleth*'s famous verses:

For everything its season,
and for every activity under heaven its time:
a time to be born and a time to die...
a time to weep and a time to laugh;

¹⁹ *Memory of Fire*, p. 131.

²⁰ *Koheleth (Ecclesiastes)* 1: 2 (*The Revised English Bible*). Vulgate: "Vanitas vanitatum, et omnis vanitas"; King James: "Vanity of vanity; all is vanity"; Reina/Valera: "Vanidad de vanidades, todo es vanidad".

a time for mourning and a time for dancing...²¹

It seems most probable that the advices of *Koheleth* are meant exclusively to young courtly males. Its social setting is patriarchal²² and aristocratic.²³ The young noble males have a natural tendency to overlook the shadowy and lugubrious dimensions of life. Certainly we do not find in the advices given here by the elder an ascetic, monastic outlook. On the contrary:

Go, then, eat your food and enjoy it,
and drink your wine with a cheerful heart...
Enjoy life with a woman you love...²⁴

Food, wine, and sex. The pleasures of the flesh and the senses. Yet, one must be always aware of the contingency of it all, for "time and chance govern all."²⁵ The same fate awaits us all: decadence and death. Thus,

However many years a person may live,
he should rejoice in all of them.
But let him remember the days of darkness,
for they will be many.²⁶

Aware of the contingency of the flesh and its pleasures, the young must be ready for the "days of darkness". They must also must obey all some crucial rules:

- To view human existence in the horizon of divine creation:

Remember your Creator
before the silver cord is snapped
and the golden bowl is broken...

²¹ *Koheleth* (*Ecclesiastes*) 3: 1-2, 4.

²² There is here a certain misogynist perspective, present in several books of the biblical wisdom literature. See, for example, *Koheleth* 7: 25-28:

After searching long without success:
I have found one man in a thousand
worthy to be called upright,
but I have not found
one woman among them all.

²³ *Koheleth* 12: 9-14 is probably a posterior interpolation, added to mitigate the irony of *Koheleth's* ideas, imposing upon them an orthodox theological direction, and to expand its homiletics to the people in general. Thus, the book would originally end with the replication, in 12: 8, of its famous opening apothegm about the vanity of existence.

²⁴ *Koheleth* (*Ecclesiastes*) 9: 7, 9.

²⁵ *Koheleth* (*Ecclesiastes*) 9: 11.

²⁶ *Koheleth* 11: 8.

before the dust returns to the earth as it began...²⁷

- To seek wisdom rather than wealth: "Better have wisdom than money."²⁸
- To avoid complicity in the oppression of the poor and destitute.

I considered all the acts of oppression perpetrated under the sun;
I saw the tears of the oppressed,
and there was no one to comfort them.

Power was on the side of the oppressors...²⁹

Awareness of life's contingency, irony in face of adversities, reverence towards the sacred, and solidarity with the downtrodden. These are the ways of the wise, the virtues extolled and inspired by *Koheleth*, the mentor of character. Reading the aphorisms of this enigmatic figure, one has a feeling similar to what a distinguished sinologist has expressed in regard to Confucius' *Analects*: "We learn... that we are in the company of a thinker of wit, power and charm, a man whose very evasions point to the heart of human truth."³⁰

Resumen

Al igual que el artículo de García-Treto, el presente ensayo explora la temática del «Mentor» original, avatar de Atenea. Pasa luego a estudiar la Epica de Gilgamesh, y la relación entre éste y Utanapishtim. En tercer lugar, estudia las enseñanzas de las poblaciones nativas de nuestro hemisferio, especialmente la tradición de los tlamatinime entre los náhuatl. Por último, relaciona todo esto con el Eclesiastés, y el personaje extraño y quizá hasta misterioso que allí ofrece consejo y dirección. Lo significativo en todo esto, especialmente en las tradiciones náhuatl y hebrea, es el entendimiento de las contingencias de la vida, la reverencia hacia lo sagrado, y la solidaridad con los oprimidos.

²⁷ *Koheleth* 12: 6-7.

²⁸ *Koheleth* 7: 12.

²⁹ *Koheleth* 4: 1.

³⁰ Jonathan Spence, "What Confucius said," *The New York Review of Books*, April 10, 1997, p. 10.

"To Be or not to Be"

A Hispanic/Latino Scholar in a North American Seminary

Carlos F. Cardoza Orlandi

I was appointed instructor of World Christianity at Columbia Theological Seminary (CTS) in July 1994. CTS is a denominational seminary, affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. It is located in Decatur, Georgia, a small city within the Atlanta metropolitan area. I have completed my first three-year contract and have recently been given a second three year contract. I will come up for tenure after 1999.

The task I have been assigned this afternoon requires some clarification. First of all, I am a scholar indebted to my Christian community. My commitment and vision to become a teacher in a theological institution have been and continue to be nourished by different Hispanic/Latino local congregations. I do not do missiology in the abstract. I am rooted in a Christian community, broader than a local congregation, yet sufficiently familiar to keep my spirituality alive.

Second, I am a scholar in formation. I am still in the tenure-track process and have much to learn regarding academic and administrative policies and issues in theological institutions. I survived the first three years and have been granted a second term, but this is far from claiming any major step in my vocation as a teacher and a scholar.

Third, I do not claim that the experience and strategies I share here are normative. On the contrary, new faculty in theological institutions need to adjust according to the context, ethos, and worldview of the institution where they are working. Each institution has a life of its own and adjustments require time, discernment, and wisdom.

Finally, I share my experiences and strategies with younger Latino/a scholars because I hope that you can learn from my experience and from my mistakes. Learn to use some of the tools that helped me understand the complicated, and sometimes confusing world of theological institutions, and to act with integrity as you face the issues which may require difficult decisions and adaptations in your vocation as a teacher in a theological institution.

I have identified three lessons that I have learned and a number of strategies I have designed that have helped me adjust to my new ministry at Columbia Seminary. During this process, I have also found the theological significance of time as I have undergone my cross-cultural experience at Columbia. As I said above, these

lessons and strategies cannot be taken as normative, but rather as insights to help Hispanic/Latino/Latina colleagues in their process of transition and adaptation in a mainstream theological institution.¹

Lesson One: From Teaching Contextualization to Doing Contextualization

As a missiologist, I am trained to grapple with theological themes of contextualization. I have a basic understanding of the theological developments in the field and I am constantly using them in courses at the seminary and in my own academic writing. Nevertheless, I was naive about how much contextualization needs to be done when beginning to teach and work in a theological institution. I knew my discipline, but did very little with it in my own transition at Columbia Theological Seminary.

The most dramatic change I experienced coming to Columbia Theological Seminary had to do with the adjustments of expectations regarding the institution, colleagues, and students. I always envisioned my ministry in the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico. I saw myself teaching in a small and economically fragile theological institution, with a small number of permanent faculty (of whom most are close friends), teaching in my mother tongue to students with whom I am acquainted from other Protestant congregations, remembering what it was to be a student and imagining what it would be like to teach at the ESPR. I would be close to my denomination, serving in a teaching ministry very close to congregations, participating in and contributing to the theological issues that the Protestant church in Puerto Rico faces, and yet keeping a strong ecumenical perspective in all my vocational activities.

Though I knew that Columbia Seminary was different, my expectations of ministry, of teaching, and of building relationships with administrative staff, colleagues, students, and congregations was significantly shaped by this vision. Initially at Columbia, I responded and reacted to my new experiences from my vision, from my expectations, and from what I actually know best, my Puerto Rican context. It cannot be any other way. We relate to new cultural and religious environments with what we have: our identity, our stories, our faith, our being. Yet, my context was not Puerto Rico nor the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, but rather a Presbyterian seminary in the Southeast of the United States. It took time and pain before I was able to begin to realize that a process of contextualization was needed in my vocational life and ministry.

The process of contextualization is particular to every scholar and institution. However, I find the following tasks helpful in doing contextualization in the context of theological institutions:

¹ Fernando Segovia wrote an illuminating article entitled, "Theological Education and Scholarship as Struggle: The Life of Racial/Ethnic Minorities in the Profession," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 2.2 (November 1994): 5-25. This article provided important information and suggestions to create my own strategies and approaches in my appointment.

* If available, read the history of the institution. Columbia Seminary had recently published its history and I was able not only to read, but also to have some conversation with colleagues about it.

* If possible, have a conversation with a retired member of the faculty who used to teach in your area or department. Do not go to this conversation without preparing yourself. Find out how long the faculty member taught at the institution, publications, written reports, etc. Come to the conversation with a general idea of the academic, pedagogical, and administrative contribution that this faculty member made to the institution.

* Read and study the minutes of previous faculty meetings. This will provide an overview of the issues brought to the faculty. It will also provide a reference point which you can use to discern the "decision-making" process in the institution. However, faculty meetings are not the only place where academic and administrative policy is evaluated and approved.

* Try to minimize the natural inclination to compare your expectations with the real life in the institution where you are serving. Do not forget that you are actually comparing your day-to-day experience with *expectations and a vision*.

* Share some of your concerns and frustrations with a Hispanic/Latina colleague from another theological institution. I remember calling some of my teachers at the ESPR and gaining insight from these conversations. I became aware that my vision was not going to fit the ESPR or any other theological institution. I needed to contextualize my experience. Definitely, my expectations were revised after such conversations.

* Participate in the extra-curricular activities of the institution as much as possible. Usually, extra-curricular activities depict the general character of the community. Observe, participate and evaluate, making connections (or identifying discrepancies) with other dimensions of your professional activities.

* Allow your intuition to guide you as you seek wisdom from other members of the faculty. Many of us need to re-learn to use our intuition. I strongly believe that intuition is a gift of God where the Holy Spirit provides us with guidance, insights, and perspectives. Use it wisely!

* A significant number of us come to mainline theological institutions with high levels of suspicion and anger. Usually, these feelings come from the marginality experienced in those institutions and/or the theological and ministerial indifference and ignorance regarding Hispanic/Latino religion and Christianity that is so common in mainstream theological education. You cannot lose these feelings nor the theological dimension that helps us clarify our experiences. Nevertheless, they have to be focused in a proactive and edifying way. You do need to keep a creative tension between them and your new responsibilities and opportunities to help change the sources of such feelings in theological institutions. Do not forget that you are a faculty member; a junior (in my case, very junior) faculty member, but yet with an opportunity to slowly and steadily **come together with other colleagues** and contribute to changes in the life of the institution.

* It is extremely important that we do not take on messianic tasks. As I mentioned above, institutions have a life of their own. We are not called, particularly in the junior years, to change the institution. Rather we should concentrate on our teaching, writing, and participation in the academic life of the institution.

* When facing difficult issues in the institution, and they will come when you least expect them, find colleagues whose voices you can join. Again, intuition has been crucial in discerning strategies and alliances in this respect.

* Decide carefully what struggles, whether academic, administrative, and/or pedagogical, you are going to enter. Not all struggles are important. And although some of them will actually challenge your integrity, you need to put in perspective the energy and time that that you are willing to put into them, especially as you are beginning to teach, continuing to write, and trying to publish some articles in preparation for a book.

Lesson Two: "One who spares words is knowledgeable; one who is cool in spirit has understanding," Prov. 17:27

As a new member of the faculty in a theological institution, people are eager to know who you are. You have the impression that you are at the center of all the issues. I remembered asking the Dean of the faculty to please remove me from the list of new faculty members, especially after being part of CTS for two years. I met with faculty, neighbors of the community, administrative staff, students, board members, and others. In most of these meetings, I was asked to speak about myself, my academic interests, my pastoral experience, and other areas of my life.

With all of this activity, I lost some perspective about my role at CTS. I forgot Paul's critical admonition: "not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement..." (Rom. 12:3). A combination of factors can actually contribute to losing perspective: finishing your Ph.D., getting a job where you wanted, being the only Hispanic/Latino/Latina in the institution, finding yourself appreciated before you are actually known.

Unfortunately, I learned quickly that I overestimated myself. Where was my mistake most obvious? Simply, in my participation in faculty meetings and committees, and in the classroom; in the context where I had the opportunity to speak. From my mistakes, I learned the following:

* Learn to discern **when** to speak. This has been the most difficult area for me. I am an outspoken person. I want my voice to be heard because I think I can make a contribution to the discussion. I want to be part of the solution. However, I learned that I am an "outsider," a neophyte in the context of the institution. Hence, my opinion is mediated by other factors, some of which I am unaware.

* Learn to discern **what** to speak. I experienced difficulty in communicating my ideas in different academic and administrative settings. Because meetings do not last forever, I need to develop precision and brevity in my communication skills. As a Puerto Rican, I am used to having time to present my concerns and issues. There

is always a story behind my theological argument. Usually, this communication style is not effective in faculty meetings, committee meetings, etc. Furthermore, do not forget that first impressions have a long-lasting effect on people. If you talk too much, you will be labeled in that manner. Therefore, it is important to work in this area of content and style.

* My mentor, Dr. Alan Neely, gave me very wise advice (regrettably, I did not implement it effectively). He suggested that I remain quiet during academic and administrative meetings for at least a year. This would provide an opportunity to learn from the meetings, to decipher the "codes" in the conversations. Again, this was an area where I found myself struggling. I continue to work at it. His counsel has proven to be very effective during these years. Though, as I mentioned above, I also struggle with first impressions that time and my own intentionality will modify.

* Never speak to students about perceived theological differences with other faculty members and/or about academic and administrative issues in the institution. Students have their own official and unofficial ways of getting information. Do not become an unofficial source of information. Student/institution dynamics have also their own particularities; faculty/institution dynamics have their own particularities. As a new member of a faculty, it is confusing to mix both dynamics. Observation, listening, patience, and conversations with other colleagues are key tasks to help discover and comprehend the interactions between both dynamics.

Lesson Number Three: Establishing Professional Boundaries and Gaining Academic Authority

I am a very informal human being. I love being around people, having a good conversation, and enjoying a good time. I am passionate about the church and the ways my discipline engages ministry. I teach with all my soul and body. My wife considers me to be an "intense" person.

I am the first Hispanic/Latino full-time faculty at CTS (Justo González was an adjunct professor for a time, and, most importantly, I do not have the academic clout that my friend and colleague has). There are some colleagues and a significant number of students who, for the first time, have a relationship with a person of my ethnicity. CTS is not only a cross-cultural experience for me; it is a cross-cultural experience for them as well.

I experienced some difficulties defining the professional boundaries between my colleagues and students, but particularly students. Things that I thought were not important, became critical. For example, the way I dressed, my accent, my accessibility in the office, my demeanor in extra-curricular activities, my age, my grading system, my inductive teaching style, etc. Furthermore, do not forget that you are not a teaching or a research assistant. Even if you have not finished your dissertation, you cannot assume that the circumstances surrounding you are similar to graduate school. This is a new "ball game."

My second year, particularly the fall semester, was very difficult. The

solidarity I found with some of my colleagues (within CTS and outside) and with some students, and the institution in general, helped keep my sense of direction and commitment to my vocation at CTS. Out of this difficult time I learned many good things. Some lessons were learned from my colleagues at CTS, others from mentors and friends. Below is some of that good wisdom:

- * Establish office hours and be consistent about them. This is important because you are also protecting time for preparing your classes and doing research and writing.

- * Protect your family and/or private time. CTS is a very congenial community. Therefore, I had to be clear about students calling at home, extra-curricular activities that would pull me away from the family, and even meetings that would require my absence from home during dinner. Theological institutions always have activities that will require your presence, especially if you belong to an under-represented group. You need to participate and contribute, but you also need to establish boundaries that will tell the institution that you have a life outside of the institution.

- * In addition to your degree and your appointment as faculty, another source that enhances your academic authority in the institution is when a colleague invites you to do a lecture or when he/she can use material you have published. When invited to do a lecture for a colleague in a course, accept it as long as you can do it. If you do, make the best possible presentation. Offer material your colleague can use. This has been extremely helpful for me.

This is a two way street! Invite colleagues to participate in your classes. Mutual recognition and collaborative teaching help the faculty know each other.

- * Prepare your classes well. The energy and time you spent writing that first syllabus is worth it. Do not improvise. Be precise, succinct, and pastoral. Students will appreciate it.

I had difficulties with my grading. Students complained to the Dean about their grades. Therefore, I did some homework, looked for help and improved my grading system.

- * Teaching will improve with experience. You will learn from the teaching styles of other colleagues, especially if you do team-taught courses. This is an advantage, because it helps you move from the graduate school mode to the teaching-in-a-seminary mode.

- * Focus on the things you have to do to enhance your scholarly work. The first three years take a significant amount of time and energy because of the adjustments and transitions in the theological institution. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance to continue academic research and writing.

Time: A Critical Theological Category in a Cross-Cultural Setting

Father Yves Congar, distinguished Roman Catholic ecumenical leader, wrote the following statement as he reflected upon the importance of time in ecumenical

gatherings:

Re-reading in the works of St. Irenaeus recently, I was struck by the role he assigns to the divine pedagogy and the importance he attaches to the time required for a new spiritual gift to become established among us.²

Transition processes, cross-cultural processes are extremely difficult. They require time, patience, discernment, courage, and commitment, but most of all time. You need to give yourself time to become familiarized and accustomed to the dynamics of theological institutions. Colleagues are extremely helpful in providing insights and viewpoints that facilitate the process. Isolation makes contextualization more difficult. In my experience, colleagues from CTS and from other institutions, especially mentors, played a critical role in helping my family and me understand the process.

Time is also crucial for the institution. Unfortunately, some can be more patient than others. Moreover, some are not aware of this factor in transitions, creating additional pain to an already complicated process. Colleagues, students, administrative staff and personnel also have a cross-cultural experience and need time to enjoy and discern the spiritual gift.

If both scholar and institution consider the appointments of new faculty a spiritual gift, we need to give ourselves time to adjust, change, and mature. In the mystery of God, the encounter between a mainstream theological institution and a scholar who represents a different perspective and voice in theological education anticipates the encounter of all "others" in the Reign of God. The eschatological significance of such a cross-cultural encounter can only be appreciated when we trust God, and know that, in the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be."

Nevertheless, in spite of the theological significance of time and eschatology in cross-cultural encounters, we cannot deny the role that politics have in a theological institution. The theological significance of time becomes critically historical, embodied in a chronological sequence rather than a *kairos*, frequently benefitting the institution. Still, this transformation in time also helps us, as scholars, decide whether we want to be part of an institution or not.

I want to finish this presentation with two quotations that provide the core of what I have learned as a future scholar in a mainstream institution. First I want to echo the words of Fernando Segovia:

...I should like to emphasize that the preceding strategies are by no means advanced as binary oppositions, resulting in an either/or approach to discourse and behavior at specific times in our professional careers. Again,

² Yves Congar, "Fifty Years in Quest of Unity," chap. in *Lausanne 77: Fifty Years of Faith and Order*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977).

I conceive of them as end-positions of a broad strategic spectrum, within which an immense variety of mixtures are possible at different times in the struggle, depending on the circumstances in which we find ourselves at any one time.³

On a more spiritual dimension, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin says:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages; we are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new...

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give our Lord the benefit of believing that His Hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.⁴

These words of political and spiritual wisdom inspire us to continue our struggle as future scholars in theological institutions. Let us not lose discernment, courage, nor commitment to participate and contribute to the transformation of theological education in mainline theological institutions. Being scholars in theological institutions is an opportunity from God, a spiritual gift that requires time, a political astuteness that requires patience and strategy, and a commitment that is nurtured by the Christian communities that shape our faith.

Resumen

En este artículo el autor comparte tres lecciones aprendidas en el transcurso de los primeros tres años de su nombramiento como instructor de Cristianismo Mundial en el Seminario Teológico de Columbia. Estas lecciones tienen el propósito de proveer ideas y estrategias para sobrevivir en una institución teológica de educación superior. Las tres lecciones son: (1) de enseñar contextualización a "hacer" contextualización; (2) "El que ahorra sus palabras tiene sabiduría; de espíritu prudente es el ser humano entendido." (Prov. 17:27) y (3) establecer fronteras profesionales y ganar autoridad académica. Finalmente el autor reflexiona sobre el concepto del tiempo como categoría teológica en contextos interculturales.

³ Segovia, Op.cit., p.21.

⁴ Quoted in "Third Sunday of Lent, Year B," in *Worship that Works: Selected Sermons*, Flower Ross, WWW.DFMS.ORG/worship-that-works/970302SR.html.

